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Chara language

Chara (alternatively **Ciara** or **C'ara**) is an Afro-Asiatic language of the North Omotic variety spoken in the Southern Nations, Nationalities, and People's Region of Ethiopia by 13,000 people.

Chara	
Pronunciation	sˈaːra[1]
Native to	Ethiopia
Native speakers	13,000 (2007 census)[2]

Language family	Afro-Asiatic
	■ Omotic
	  ■ North
	    ■ Ometo
	      ■ (unclassified)
	        ■ **Chara**

Writing system	None
Language codes	
ISO 639-3	cra
Glottolog	char1269 (http://glottolog.org/resource/languoid/id/char1269)[3]

Status

Chara is geographically situated to the southeast of Nayi, west of Kullo, northeast of Mesketo, and northwest of Gofa.[4] Chara speakers live in the Southern Nations, Nationalities, and People's Region, in the Debub Omo Zone, on both sides of the Omo river.[5] Chara speakers are scattered in three villages in Ethiopia: Geba a meša, Buna Anta, and Kumba.[1] Native speakers may also speak Melo, Wolaytta (54% lexical similarity with Chara) to the east, and Kafa to the west.[5]

Phonology

Consonants

Consonant phonemes of Chara[6]

		Labial	Alveolar	Palatoalveolar/ Palatal	Velar	Glottal
Nasal[1]		m	n	[ɲ]		
Plosive	**Voiceless**	p	t		k	ʔ
	Voiced	b	d		g	
	Ejective	pʼ	tʼ		kʼ	
	Implosive	ɓ	(ɗ)			
Affricate	**Voiceless**		ts	tɕ		
	Voiced			dʑ		
	Ejective		sʼ	tɕʼ		
Fricative		[f]	s	ɕ, (ʑ)		h
Approximant		w		j		
Trill			r			
Lateral			l			

[p] and [f] are in free variation.[7] /ɗ/ only occurs in the word /jalɗa~jaltʼa/ 'crooked'.[6] Yilma (2002) found /ɓ/ to occur five times in around 550 lexical items.[7] He also found /ʑ/ occurring in two, both in the sequence /iʑa/.[7] Occurrence of /ɗ/ and /pʼ/ may be governed by dialectal variation.[7]

Vowels

Vowel phonemes of Chara[7]

	Front	Central	Back
Close	i		u
Mid	e		o
Open		a	

/a/ is realized as [ə] in unstressed word-medial syllables.[8]

Length is minimally contrastive.[7] Minimal pairs include /mola/ 'fish', /moːla/ 'egg'; /masa/ 'to wash', /maːsa/ 'leopard'; /buna/ 'flower', /buːna/ 'coffee'.[7]

Suprasegmentals

Chara has phonemic stress.[8] Examples: /ˈbakʼa/ 'to slap', /baˈkʼa/ 'empty'; /ˈwoja/ 'to come', /woˈja/ 'wolf'.[8]

Morphophonemics

Morpheme-initial nasals assimilate point of articulation to that of the preceding consonant, usually found when verbs are suffixed with the singular imperative morpheme /-na/, e.g. /dub-na/ 'to hit.imp' → [dubma] 'hit!'.[9]

Grammar

Morphology

Chara generally uses noun case suffixes and postpositions.[5]

Nouns are inflected for gender, number, definiteness, case, and possession.[10] These are all suffixes, except for the possessive.[10]

Gender pairs are usually lexical, except for a few with /-i/ in the masculine and /-a/ in the feminine.[10] Examples:[10]

> /mansa/ 'ox', /mija/ 'cow'
> /izi/ 'he', /iza/ 'she'

Nouns and adjectives inflect for plural with the suffix /-eːndi/.[10] Examples:[11]

> /ina/ 'mother', /ineːndi/ 'mothers'
> /dala/ 'while (sg.)', /daleːndi/ 'white (pl.)'

Definiteness in nouns is marked with the suffix /-naːzi/ (as an independent word meaning 'the male/man') for masculines and /-ena/ for feminines.[12] Adjectives take /-bi/ in the masculine and /-ena/ in the feminine.[12] Examples:[12]

> /mansa/ 'ox', /mansanaːzi/ 'the ox'
> /mija/ 'cow', /mijena/ 'the cow/
> /karta/ 'black', /kartabi/ 'the black (m.)', /kartena/ 'the black (f.)'

Nouns and adjectives may be marked for nominative, accusative, dative, genitive, ablative, instrumental, or vocative case.[13] The nominative suffix is /-i/, accusative /-(i)s/, dative /-(i)ri/, genitive /-e/, ablative /-kaj/, instrumental /-ne/, and vocative /-o/.[13]

Chara pronouns[14]

Person	Independent		Possessive
	(s)	**(pl)**	**(s)**
1	/tani/	/noːne~nuni/	/tareri/
2	/neːni/	/in ' ti/	/nereri/
3 (m)	/izi/	/itsendi/	/izeri/
(f)	/iza/		

Bound possessive pronouns: /ta-mija/ 'my cow', /ne-mija/ 'your cow', /iza-mija/ 'his cow'.[15]

Syntax

Chara is a subject–object–verb language.[5]

Adjectives end in /-a/ like nouns, and inflect for number, definiteness, plurality, and case.[16] In noun phrases adjectives precede their nouns, and are not inflected.[16]

Examples

Numerals 1-10[17]

Number	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Chara	issa:	nanta:	keza:	obda:	uchcha	sa:fun	la:pun	nandirse	biza:	tantsa:

Notes

1. Yilma (2002:4)
2. Ethiopia 2007 Census (http://www.csa.gov.et/images/documents/pdf_files/regional/CountryLevel.pdf)
3. Hammarström, Harald; Forkel, Robert; Haspelmath, Martin, eds. (2017). "Chara" (http://glottolog.org/resource/languoid/id/char1269). *Glottolog 3.0*. Jena, Germany: Max Planck Institute for the Science of Human History.
4. Yilma & Siebert (2002:4)
5. Chara language (https://www.ethnologue.com/18/language/cra/) at *Ethnologue* (18th ed., 2015)
6. Yilma (2002:4–5)
7. Yilma (2002:5)
8. Yilma (2002:6)
9. Yilma (2002:7)
10. Yilma (2002:8)
11. Yilma (2002:8–9)
12. Yilma (2002:9)
13. Yilma (2002:9–11)
14. Yilma (2002:11–12)
15. Yilma (2002:12)
16. Yilma (2002:11)
17. Numbers in Afro-Asiatic Languages (http://www.zompist.com/mide.htm#afro)

References

- Yilma, Aklilu (1995), "Some notes on the Chara language: Sound system and noun morphology", *S.L.L.E. linguistic reports 32: 2-12*
- Survey of Chara, Dime, Melo and Nayi, part 1. Yilma, Aklilu; Siebert, Ralph. 1995. S.L.L.E. linguistic reports 25: 2-8. oai:sil.org:36294
- Yilma, Aklilu; Siebert, Ralph (2002). "Sociolinguistic survey report of the Chara, Dime, Melo and Nayi languages of Ethiopia part 1" (http://www.sil.org/silesr/2002/029/SILESR2002-029.pdf) (PDF). *SIL Electronic Survey Reports 2002-029*. Retrieved 2009-08-12.
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External links

- Resources in and about the Chara language (http://www.language-archives.org/language/cra)
- Chara basic lexicon at the Global Lexicostatistical Database (http://starling.rinet.ru/cgi-bin/response.cgi?root=new100&morpho=0&basename=new100\omo\ggm&first=0)